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Industrial Peoria

By

LEROY E. ROARK

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PEORIA
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October 1924

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Industrial Peoria

By Leroy E. Roark

A REVIEW

OF

Advantages to Industry

Character of Products

Co-operation of Workers

The Citizens Part

Safety First

The Future

*To the earnest and sincere minded
industrial leaders of this favored
spot in the Valley of the Illinois,
whose energy and enterprise so
generously expended have developed
thus far one of the greatest indus-
trial centers in the Middle West.*

PREFACE

With full knowledge and appreciation of the incompleteness of this work, and recognizing its shortcomings in dealing with what is believed to be the greatest problem of the generation, justification is still found for publishing this book because of the need for a better understanding of the great strides that Industrial Peoria has made, and to acquaint its citizens with the fact that the industrial phase of Peoria's progress has kept pace with the world at large. The industrial leaders of Peoria recognize fully their obligation and responsibility, from an economic and humanitarian standpoint, to the community which they have so ably aided in developing. The future of Peoria is in the hands of the generation now coming into their majority, and if they will seize the opportunities that are being offered them and carry on with the sincerity of purpose and progressive vision of those who have gone before, Peoria's position as one of America's great industrial centers is assured.

—L. E. R.

Advantages to Industry

There was a time when the prominence of Peoria was due to its being one of the greatest grain centers of the middle west. At a later date it was known throughout the nation as a distilling center and prominent in jobbing and distributing of food and general commodities, but in the past few years its greatest renown has come to Peoria by reason of its having developed into one of the most prominent industrial and commercial centers in this part of the country.

Being the second largest city in the third greatest industrial state in the union, there has naturally come to Peoria a lot of commercial enterprise that was attracted by reason of its size and general prominence and popularity. Large cities well located

are always regarded as strategic locations for ware houses, distributing offices, and branch offices, but to attract the attention of manufacturers, whose greatest considerations are the proximity of raw materials, transportation, power, labor supply and market, a city must have specific natural and useable advantages. In this analysis Peoria has stood up in very good shape.

Situated in one of the richest coal producing regions of America and in the very heart of one of the greatest distributing and consuming territories of the middle west, with an ample supply of good water and transportation facilities, the next step for a manufacturer to undertake is the analysis of the labor market, the adaptability of the class of labor in a community and its general productive ability.

This having been found to be far above

the average for an industrial center has been readily recognized as being possibly one of the greatest assets the community has to offer manufacturers, and the fact that Peoria labor is productive and thrifty is not an accident. It is the logical outcome of years of study and consideration on the part of employers whose plants have been located in the community and have been the cause of and a part of the gradual industrial development. In Peoria today approximately thirty of our largest manufacturing institutions are under the direct supervision of the man or group of men who founded them. This is a remarkable record, and is one of the highest testimonials to the spirit of industrial Peoria that can be related. It is generally recognized by authorities on industrial subjects that the industrial expansion of a community comes from within and it is evident, therefore, that Peoria's future depends upon its industrial progress and the

development and prosperity of the institutions already located there.

There are many reasons why communities do not prosper, but there are only a few reasons why a community cannot progress and one of the reasons is the lack of proper appreciation by the citizens of the community as to what the mills and factories and workshops mean to a community from the standpoint of regularly employed manpower and the distribution of earned wages. Fortunately, in Peoria, there is a growing consciousness of what the industries mean and a greater number of citizens find the time to take an interest in the policies that control the management of our local industries. For the past few years there has been competition between industrial communities for the securing of additional industries, railroad terminals and business houses, and the greatest success and prog-

ress has been experienced in those communities that recognize the importance of industry and whose general civic and industrial policy is one of encouragement rather than discouragement.

Prosperous conditions may only be expected in communities where an enlightened public understands the economic value of uninterrupted and unhampered industrial operations. As an industrial center, Peoria has unlimited possibilities, but its advantages and desirability as a place for new industries to locate will be measured and determined by the prosperity of the institutions already established, and progress they have been able to make.

For many years the farming industry was recognized as the back bone of our national prosperity, but during the past few years since the farming industry has suf-

ferred such a serious set back, it has become more and more evident to the people of the middle west that the industries have played a much greater part in this prosperity than perhaps ever before was brought to their attention.

To illustrate this condition, sixty-five of Peoria's manufacturing establishments paid their wage earners \$233,228 per week, or a total of \$12,127,859.64 for the calendar year ending December 31, 1923. Peoria is one of those rare communities in which a majority of the money earned is spent in the business houses of the same community. This is largely responsible for the present existence of larger and higher grade merchandise houses in this city than is found in the average city of this size. According to the average national family budget the following percentages of a wage earner's income go for necessities:

43.31 per cent for food.
13.2 per cent for clothing.
20.4 per cent for sundries.
17.7 per cent for shelter.
5.6 per cent for fuel and light.

Hence, the department stores, retail merchants, professional men and business houses of Peoria receive 76.7 per cent of the wages earned or a total of \$9,302,068.34 from the workers in sixty-five of the manufacturing plants alone. When one considers the many other lines indirectly connected with industry that men and women are engaged in, it will give some idea of the total amount of money brought into the community through the sale of the products of the local manufacturing plants.

As to the desirability of Peoria as a point at which to locate manufacturing plants for articles of general distribution, the follow-

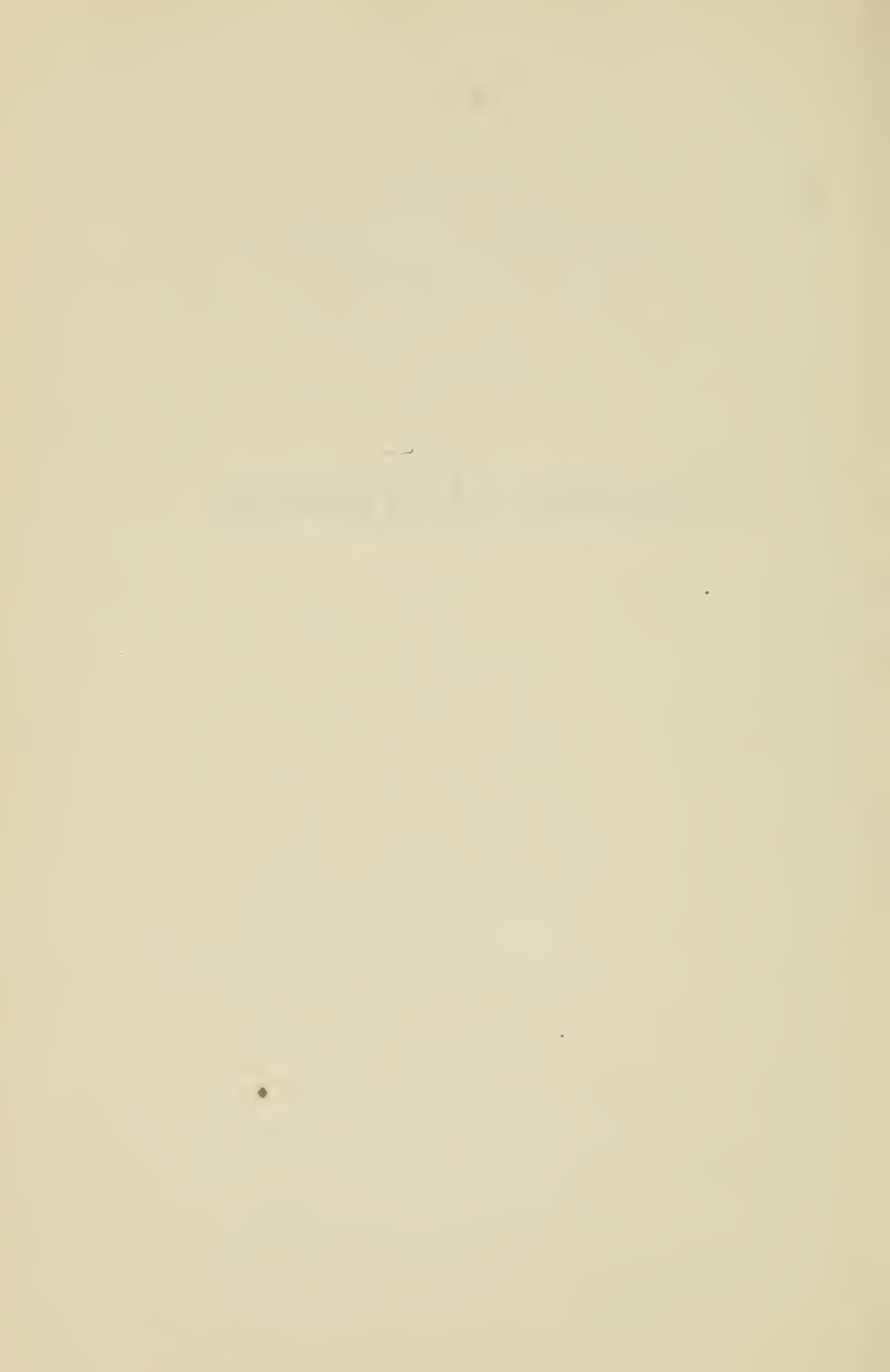
ing is an interesting example. Five internationally known manufacturers have chosen Peoria for the point at which to situate their manufacturing plant, after making a survey of the entire United States. These plants are the Bemis Brothers Bag company, the Barrett company, the Commercial Solvents Corporation, the United States Industrial Alcohol company and the Larkin company.

As another recognition of the desirability of Peoria as an industrial city, the gigantic power plant of the Central Illinois Utilities company is now in process of construction on the east bank of the river and the electric power developed in this plant will be furnished to many cities in central Illinois for the operation of utilities and industrial plants.

This is a record that speaks for itself and

should be an inducement for the citizens of this community to be ever on the alert for an opportunity to gain an understanding of the industries that have aided in the building of the community and whose progress will play an important part in its future.

Character of Products



Six thousand car loads of manufactured good were produced in the industries of Peoria during January, 1924. Very few Peorians realize the importance or the magnitude of our local industries.

From all corners of the earth are gathered various kinds of raw material that are brought to Peoria to be fabricated and manufactured into finished, usable articles, and after going through the manufacturing process of our local industries this material is sent out as a finished product into all parts of the world.

From the tropics and the Orient comes the raw material used in the compounding and manufacturing of pharmaceutical pro-

ducts produced by a local drug plant. This particular product is one of the greatest boons to humanity in its uses for the destruction of insects and vermin. Every country in the world consumes this product and its standing as a commodity is evidenced by the recent national advertising carried on through the Saturday Evening Post.

Sisal from Mexico and fibre from the Philippines is shipped to Peoria to be made into rope, and after passing through the hundreds of spinning looms of our local cordage plant, it is prepared for shipment. It is marketed and utilized in many ways, from the binding of grain in the harvest fields and the equipping of sailing vessels to the hoisting of mighty machinery and building materials used in modern construction.

Perhaps one of the most interesting classes of industries that this community has are the local paper mills. Hundreds of tons of discarded rags are used daily in the roofing mills of Peoria for the manufacturing and fabricating of building and roofing paper. It is in a large sense a business built upon a salvage basis, since it uses as its raw material an otherwise worthless commodity. The process through which this material passes furnishes one of the modern miracles of science and chemistry. Ton after ton of this roofing paper speeds over rapidly driven steam drums, and carload after carload of the finished product goes to other points east and south for the finishing operations which turn it into a roofing cover for our modern buildings.

In the paper bag industry, of which Peoria has one of the largest and most modern plants, many carloads of damaged rope

from all ports of the seas and all parts of the world are used. This rope, together with rags and other ingredients, is cooked into pliable and appearanceable paper stock and further operations transform it into sacks for flour, cement, and jute paper for many other purposes. This jute paper is the strongest fabricated paper known, and by special process can be made water-proof. It is almost as indestructible as the finest linen bag and is preferable to the gunny sack.

Other products in world wide demand are the many products of our local tinware plants, such as cans, pails, and tin containers of all descriptions, sizes and uses are produced in Peoria by special machinery that almost baffles the human eye and brain in accuracy and phenomenal operation.

Steel products, wire fencing and nails

used in almost every civilized country in the world are produced in Peoria. Grain planting, cultivating and harvesting machinery that is in use through every step of agricultural production has long been the one outstanding product of this community.

Cooperage barrels and wooden containers that bring historic recollections have long been one of the foremost products of Peoria. The cooperage plants of this community have for years been regarded as producers of the finest tight cooperage that has ever been marketed.

Tractors of world-wide renown that have revolutionized transportation under unusual conditions are products of one of the gigantic plants of the community.

Modern labor saving machinery in the way of washing machines, automatic con-

crete tamping machinery, grain hoists and oil burners are other well known products of our local industries. The future of these the two particular household appliances can scarcely be over estimated, as the modern home is incomplete without them.

Malt products for the manufacturing of foodstuffs are some of the commodities produced by a Peoria industry.

Industrial alcohol and chemical solvents in trainloads leave our city daily for use in eastern consumption and export.

When one considers the particular basic character of the products of our industries, the future of industrial Peoria is in no way uncertain or questionable. There are very few articles produced in this community that can be regarded as luxurious or unnecessary, such as fine furniture, pianos, or

those things that are usually regarded as non-essential.

The steel, rope, machinery, containers, tractors, pharmaceutical products, building materials and milling products are as necessary to world markets as anything consumed. The thousands of industrious and painstaking workmen who produce these articles get from their work a certain amount of contentment and happiness in knowing that they are producing really worthwhile articles. They are not only cogs in the machinery; they are the actual producers of commodities that go to make the world better, safer and happier, and the inspiration and contentment that they get from their work surely goes to make the article that much better and more useful for the performance of its functions in either domestic or foreign lands.

Co-operation of Workers

Up to a few years ago one of the most costly and burdensome problems that progressive industry had to face was excessive labor turn over, which was caused in many instances by minor dissatisfactions on the part of workmen, misunderstandings between foreman and workmen, unsatisfactory working conditions and other needless causes which added greatly to the burden of industrial costs and was a vehicle by which labor drifted from plant to plant and city to city, getting nowhere and penalizing all concerned.

In recent years a systematic study of the causes of labor turn over and the correction of minor difficulties, many of

which were unknown to management until brought to light by close study, together with a real desire for co-operation on both sides has reduced labor turnover among the industries of this community to an absolute minimum.

There still remains, of course, the natural labor turn over created by men advancing in their respective crafts or trades, the deserved promotion of competent workmen, and the usual small amount of shifting about to secure the kind and character of work that best suits the desire and the ability of the worker, but broadly and generally speaking, the decrease made in unnecessary labor turn over has been a financial advantage to both workmen and management, and has been a great factor in the maintenance of satisfactory labor conditions that go to make an ambitious and happy community of workmen. A review of

some of the efforts that have materialized so satisfactorily is interesting.

The inauguration of Insurance Groups among the men and Relief Associations to take care of workmen during the period of minor injury has been one of the things that has created a medium for co-operation. These associations are controlled and operated by workmen themselves. The company contributes a certain amount and the workmen pay into the treasury a small amount of ten to twenty cents a week. It has been an opportunity for expression of ideas of the workmen in connection with organizations of this kind.

Base ball clubs and teams in various kinds of sport have created a friendly rivalry among the various industrial plants and among the departments of various plants. In these instances the management

furnishes the team with uniforms and equipment and the men contribute their very best efforts to successfully represent their team in competition with others. The majority of the industries give their workmen a Saturday half holiday, and it is during this holiday that competitive sports are staged. Bowling teams for the winter and indoor baseball tournaments are part of the general program.

Intermittent rest periods in particularly confining work is another small item that contributes to a better understanding since it satisfies the minds of the workmen and prepares them better for the physical and mental labor that they are called upon to endure.

A majority of our plants are equipped with modern and attractive cafeteria service where workmen can secure warm meals

and food suited to the particular kind of work they are doing. These cafeterias are in most instances operated at a loss on the part of the company, but they contribute so much in the way of contentment, and are so well patronized by the workmen that the companies consider them good investments. Most of the cafeterias are managed by competent and experienced chefs, and the character of food served is regulated by the kind of work that is being done. In the plants where heavy and arduous work is performed well balanced and nourishing meals are served. In plants where female work is employed, lighter luncheons and food suited to their physical condition is dispensed. This is one of the most sensible contributions to present day industrial life.

There is one major item that undoubtedly contributes more to community benefit than any other and that is the movement

on the part of employers to maintain Group Insurance covering their entire working forces. The amount of benefit from this insurance is regulated by length of service. New workers are insured for \$500, special provision being made for other members of their family, and graduates up to \$2,000 and \$3,000, payable upon death or permanent disability. Many of the policies in effect in our local industries protect not only the workman but members of his family and the accident phase of it covers the entire family for accident caused either in the course of employment or otherwise. A small part of the premium for this insurance is paid by the workmen; the major part of it is paid by the company, and this is a form of benefit that goes deep into the heart of the employee. It has been one of the greatest factors in the reduction of labor turn over that has been inaugurated in recent years.

Where interest of this character is displayed on the part of the management, the workman feels that he is a part of the institution and his efforts and interest are that much greater. A great deal of distress and misery is avoided through this channel of co-operation and the community generally is benefited by a relationship of this kind between management and workmen. Management that discloses itself willing to bear a part of the burden of safeguarding their employees against misfortune is a constructive force in a community and Peoria is to be congratulated on the progressive strides that are being taken in this direction. The manner in which the working forces respond to these indications of good will and confidence is encouraging, and one can safely say that the industrial future of Peoria is assured of pleasant relations, so far as these two co-workers in industry are concerned.

The Citizens Part

Attention has been called to the many factors that contribute to the welfare of a successful industrial community. Among these have been in order of their importance, progressive management, trained and loyal workmen, products of a basic character, proper recognition of the rights of workers and management. We come now to the one factor that perhaps is as widely neglected and unappreciated as any of the items that contribute to industrial advancement, and this factor is the attitude of and the part that citizens play in the affairs of industry.

In Peoria and surrounding districts there are many thousands of families and households, and hundreds of business houses that depend upon the payrolls of the industries

for their existence. These two factors jointly are always on the lookout for the benefits that they secure from industrial operation to which they have come to believe they are entitled, but when it comes to the extending of a friendly or a helping hand to a much perplexed industrial situation there is an unwillingness on the part of the public to co-operate, together with an apathy for the welfare of industry when it is perplexed that has been in evidence for too long a time and it must ultimately be eliminated, if the full measure of success is to be attained.

GENERAL ENCOURAGEMENT

An attitude of general encouragement is very much to be desired. Knowing that the prosperity of the community depends upon its industries, the community that secures its very livelihood therefrom can not expect

always to be on the receiving end, and it is the responsibility of that community, partially at least, to see that the conditions surrounding industry are as favorable as they can possibly be made; still remaining consistent with the welfare of the citizens.

A general understanding of some of industry's problems is necessary, not so much because the public can help in the solution of those particular problems, but that the public will more readily understand the viewpoint of industry and the delays and setbacks which sometimes are experienced when they think everything should be going along in good shape. It is altogether too often the case that a thoughtless public will too readily and willingly condemn a condition created by industry, when as a matter of fact the situation is one that is not under control of the industry at all, but is one that is more of a community problem.

It will take a long time for the public to be brought to the point of appreciating that some of the objectionable features of industrial operation, such as dense smoke and clattering noise, are the means whereby a living is earned for families and in some instances is more to be tolerated and put up with than it is to be condemned and clamor made for the isolation of plants responsible for the condition. There are a great many details under this heading that could be brought to light, but it can be summed up by again saying that encouragement to industry is the public cue, if they would increase the prosperity that successful industries bring to a community.

INVESTMENT

Remarkable figures are being brought to light showing the amount of capital that small investors are putting into public util-

ities, manufacturing plants and industries that create and produce the necessities of life. This is perhaps one of the most sensible and constructive factors that can be shown. The packing houses of Chicago and the middle west have thousands and thousands of stockholders among the citizens of the community and many hundreds of stockholders are employes. This faith and confidence and the spirit that prompts the employe to invest his extra earnings or his capital back into the products that he puts his skill and workmanship into is of a high order.

There are several large railroads in the east, one of which is the Pennsylvania system, which among its employes has several thousand stock holders who profit doubly by their very toil. The telephone companies and utilities of the middle west have taken the matter in hand and many millions of

dollars of the workers' money now aids in the financing of these properties.

In January of 1924 the General Electric company organized an Employees Security corporation and today 23,281 employes own \$8,213,280 worth of bonds in the company and the interest paid back to these employes on June 1, totaled \$300,000.

SELECTION OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

In the administration of industrial affairs, the co-operation, the assistance, and the sympathetic consideration of public officials is often needed and here is another place where the public mind can extend to industry the hand of help. In the expansion of an industrial institution sometimes the geographical or service location is found to be detrimental and industry turns to the heads of various departments of city man-

agement. Generally speaking, there is conflict to begin with. The public official does not see that in the expansion of the local industry, greater earning power is created but in his mind's eye he sees only an example of greed and avarice, and it is from this condition that pork barrel politics have sprung. It is idle to assume that the attitude of either is purposely detrimental to the best interests of the community, but there is a lack of contact that penalizes the community and creates dissension.

In the selection of public officials, therefore, it is to the community's interest that men of business training be selected; men who have a proper appreciation of the rights of a citizen and an institution, and above all, men who will recognize the value of legitimate business expansion without penalty. If a proper relationship is established and maintained between general public

sentiment and the conduct of the business institutions in a community, there is no question that it will contribute to the prosperity of the community, and the public must recognize the fact that a community can prosper only in proportion to the business prosperity that prevails in the surrounding territory.

Safety First

In connection with the progress made by the industries of our community, a survey brings to light a number of interesting features that point to a high standard of co-operation and interest on the part of the working forces and management.

Perhaps the greatest blessing that has come to industry in the past few years, and one that has developed into a national institution representing the welfare of all people, is what is generally known as "Safety First". Safety first originated as a movement to protect the life and limbs of workers in hazardous occupations, and has traveled through the cycle of evolution and development until it is today recognized as a mighty factor in industry. To the casual

observer Safety First consists largely in the posting of notices, pictures and charts; all containing the same sentiment, "Be Careful," but investigation into the real functioning of Safety First is a story of interest.

Modern industry first runs across Safety First when it locates its property. The types of buildings that are used, the methods of ventilation, the colors and kinds of paint, the placing of machinery and the kinds of floor that are used are all chosen with Safety First as a factor as to their suitability. There are many industries whose character of work is necessarily hazardous, and it is a revelation to see the tremendous amount of thought and care that has been given the safeguarding of life and limbs. The machinery equipped with modern safety devices is almost "fool proof" and operations that up to a few years ago were regarded as hazardous are now accomplished with but little fear of accident.

Whirring gears and lashing belts are no longer a menace to the life and limbs of workmen. They are enclosed in mesh guards that make it impossible to touch them accidentally or otherwise. They can be removed only by considerable work and operators are kept away from the machinery while necessary repairs are being made on it by experienced forces. Automatic stop switches and special electrical devices stop and start the powerful machinery, and this is accomplished it seems sometimes almost magically. These machines are equipped with either pedal or arm rests and the slightest pressure upon either brings the giant presses to a positive stop, in the event of either clothing or limb being thrown against the machinery.

About 80 per cent of the improvements, safeguards and devices that are used in developing Safety First conditions have been

made at the suggestion of the workmen, as he is the man whose welfare is at stake and whose judgment is dependable on this subject.

In the average plant the Safety First work is under the supervision of an experienced safety engineer or a responsible executive. Periodical inspections are made by duly authorized authorities, and it is quite usual for an inspection to be made without finding a single feature that is hazardous or a menace to the lives of the workers.

Peoria has played a prominent part in safety work development. Safety First as a national movement was brought to life through the efforts of the National Safety Council, and two of the original group of men who inaugurated the National Safety Council reside in Peoria. One is a leading physician, who is a national authority on industrial surgery, and the other a prom-

inent manufacturer, whose plant, employing hundreds of workmen, has long been recognized as one of the finest equipped institutions from a safety standpoint in the United States. First aid equipment is found in every department of the plants in our community. Many industries are found with shop hospitals, some have nurses in attendance constantly and all have trained first aid workers available at all times.

The co-operation between the workmen and the management that has brought this about has been one of the examples of what constructive co-operation can really accomplish. The men lend greater efforts to their work when their minds are free from the danger of accident. Accidents are fewer and homes are happier.

The Future

Every generation or cycle of years is given, it appears, to the accomplishment of some great feat or to the solution of some momentous problem, either moral, psychological, politic or economic, and it is evident that the passing years have taken great strides toward the solution of the economic problem as it applies to industry, and with this feature well on its way to solution there lies before industry a period of constructive expansion and progress.

The subject of industrial progress is one that can almost be considered technical and to those capable of analyzing this subject it is evident that Peoria's future is as

much a matter of expansion as of acquisition. There are located in this community many small institutions, manufacturing specialties, that have before them an unlimited future, and by careful nourishing on the part of the public these institutions will grow on the merit of their products. It will be history repeating itself because Peoria today is comprised largely of institutions that originated here, expanded slowly, and today take their place as leaders in the production of their particular commodity.

Examination discloses the slowly spreading web of spur tracks and switch tracks finding new areas to serve and pushing their way into what has been heretofore unoccupied territory. Our terminals deserve the highest commendation for their watchfulness and progressive policies. There is no signal of progress quite so sub-

stantial as that indicated by the expansion of terminal facilities. Our industrial area is being enlarged, and by these signs you will know that Peoria is not standing still.

The rejuvenation of distilling properties for the production of solvents and commercial spirits has opened up a new field for Peoria. Properties that were considered scrap and useless are serving as ideal manufacturing units for the new processes now employing greater numbers of men than were ever employed in these institutions before. Particularly favorable to this class of industry which uses corn and its by-products, is the Peoria location, and herein lies the opportunity for encouragement and co-operation on the part of the public. Again the responsibility of the citizen to magnify his interest and make welcome these new types of industry that seek permanent locations.

The co-operation of all, unlimited encouragement, absolute unity of purpose, and faith to overcome obstacles must be the watchwords, together with an everlasting pledge to protect the name of Peoria as a worthy harbor of progressive industry.

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